

# HR Link



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## President's Message

By Tracey Meek, GMA SHRM President

November this year marks a change for many of us as we wait to see how the elections will unfold on a national, state and local level. Here at GMA SHRM, we will also be experiencing some changes among our current volunteer leaders as well as welcoming some new leaders.

Pat Miller, co-chair for the Programming Committee, has decided to step down from her role but will continue to be an active committee member. We sincerely thank Pat for her hard work and dedication in helping to lead the charge in bringing forth quality programs each and every month. Anthony Dix, VP Programming, and Jennifer Mirus, co-chair for Programming Committee are actively recruiting for a new co-chair. Please contact one of them to express your interest!

The GMA SHRM board of directors has two open board positions at this time. The Director of Workforce Readiness is a new board position and will be responsible for the activities and direction of our community partnership program and our diversity initiatives. This is an exciting opportunity for an individual who is interested in linking our membership with community volunteer programs, helping area students and residents prepare for

the workforce. This position also plays a key role in developing diversity awareness programming for our chapter and helping us look internally to see that we are attracting, retaining and serving a diverse population of members.

The second board position is the Director of Communications & Marketing. This position will be responsible for the activities and direction of our membership communications, public relations and marketing efforts. This would include involvement with our HR Link newsletter, website communications, our annual directory, and our internal and external marketing programs.

If you are interested in applying for either of these volunteer leadership opportunities, please contact Belinda Weber, President Elect, at [bwebe2@amfam.com](mailto:bwebe2@amfam.com) or 242-4100 x30574 by **December 1, 2004**.

And finally, I will be stepping down from my position as President of the GMA SHRM board this month. My family and I are moving to New York and, unfortunately, I will not be able to further fulfill my role as a volunteer leader here in Madison. Over the past three years, it has been my pleasure to work with all of the volunteers and serve our membership. Madison has a well-educated and quality group of human resources professionals! You should all be commended for the work you do and the time and talent you provide the community.

Although I am disappointed to be leaving at this time, I am excited to announce that we have two outstanding individuals that will serve as Co-Presidents for the remainder of the term, Laura Jaggi and Stephanie Kimball. As many of you may know, Laura has been a dedicated board member for four and a half years serving as Vice President of Membership and most recently as Director of Communication. Stephanie Kimball has been with our board for over a year and will also continue to serve as Secretary/Treasurer for the board. Laura and Stephanie are truly energized to lead the GMA SHRM chapter membership into 2005. They will be providing their bios and additional information in the President's Message for the December HR Link.

As I mentioned early on, this has been an exciting month of changes and new opportunities. Thank you all for the opportunity to lead the GMA SHRM chapter. I wish you well for the holiday season!

## Legal Updates

Are you a SHRM member, legal professional, and interested in writing an article/question of the month for the GMA SHRM HR Link? We are opening up the Legislative Update section of the HR Link member newsletter to interested and qualified SHRM members and partners. The general guidelines for the Legislative Update section outline that the article should be a summary of legislative changes, not an interpretation. This section of the HR Link offers members who don't have access to national resources a chance to keep up on legislative changes. Additionally, all authors in the HR Link gain to benefit from becoming better connected to the chapter and membership.

If you have questions, or to submit an article, contact GMA SHRM at [chapteradmin@gmashrm.org](mailto:chapteradmin@gmashrm.org). Also see HR Link guidelines for more information.

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### **Benchmarking: More than a numbers game!**

By Brian Lowenthal, Managing Partner, The Benchmark Partners, LLC

In 1988, the first winners of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award were announced: Motorola, Globe Metallurgical Inc., and Westinghouse Electric's Nuclear Fuel Division. In subsequent years, Xerox, Fedex, IBM, Cadillac, Milliken, Texas Instruments and The Ritz-Carlton all received the honor. They all had one thing in common that set them apart from their competitors: they all used the same measurement tool to dramatically improve customer service, quality, reliability, and accuracy of their business processes. Benchmarking became one of the world's mostly widely talked about and used measurement *and* management tools. Companies in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand all wanted to understand and implement Benchmarking as a means to achieving competitive advantage.

In those early days of Benchmarking, there were very few companies and fewer individuals who had the expertise to effectively implement this new tool. All Baldrige winners have the responsibility to teach anyone who wants to learn how they achieved their results. Desire to learn was soon replaced by the need to learn. As more companies deployed benchmarking, their results led to breakthrough improvements. There were no benchmarking clearinghouses, no consortiums, no benchmarking exchanges, no websites to log onto. In order to understand the what, how, and why of these award winning and top performing companies, they had to talk to each other. They established dialogues that provided a meaningful exchange of information. This exchange of information let us to ask more and more questions about how and why companies did what they did to achieve their results. We were able to understand the practices and most importantly, the context the practices lived within. Companies around the world used Benchmarking to dramatically improve their business processes and achieve new levels of competitive advantage.

### ***Benchmarking was more than a numbers game!***

Benchmarking has become a misused and misunderstood measurement tool. Today, companies rely upon others to collect information from anyone interesting in submitting it. The data is scrubbed and filtered, massaged and manipulated, and mathematically calculated. The end result is a number that provides little insight, no context, and has little value. This number is then used by a company to make a decision that can have negative consequences on the bottom-line, on quality, customer service, or employee satisfaction. Take the example of the "benchmark" for number of employees served by 1 HR FTE: 1:85. This number was provided by a well known HR consulting firm and published in the August 2004 issue of a popular HR journal.

The unfortunate scenario that unfolds when a CEO sees this ratio will play out in far too many companies. The CEO first asks the head of HR, "What is our ratio?" If the ratio is lower, the directive is to cut staff. If the ratio is higher, the head of HR is questioned on their function's effectiveness: "What do other organizations get from HR that we don't?"

The questions that should be asked by the CEO are:

- What is the Value Discipline of these organizations and to what extent does HR align with it?
- What is the strategy of the business and how do these HR FTE's contribute?
- What is the Effectiveness Rating of these HR FTE's?
- Are the HR FTE's seen as Business Partners or Administrators?
- What do these HR FTE's spend their time doing?
- What is the ROI these organizations receive from HR?
- What is the financial performance of these companies?
- Does the performance of these HR organizations exceed your own?

Not one of these questions can be answered by the ratio 1:85. The only way to answer these questions is to enter into a dialogue with the companies that are performing at the level you want your HR organization to perform at. Once these questions are answered, it may prove that this ratio has no significance to your HR Strategy or service delivery.

***Benchmarking is more than a numbers game!***

Metrics and ratios do play a role in Benchmarking. Metrics are best used in the Benchmarking process as result measures. Metrics should be used to determine if the results achieved by another company are more successful or effective than your own results. If another company is achieving a result that exceeds your own, then the opportunity to understand the what, how, and why of their practice or process forms the basis of the Benchmarking study. The metric is not the driver of change. The practice or process that produces the desired level of performance is the driver of change. ***Comparing your metric to someone else's metric is NOT benchmarking.***

Benchmarking is:

*"a continuous, systematic process for evaluating the products, services, and work processes of organizations that are recognized as representing best practices for the purpose of organizational improvement."*

*The Benchmarking Book*  
By Michael Spendolini  
1992 AMACOM

The proper deployment of the Benchmarking process can make significant and dramatic improvements in organizational performance. Emergency medical teams benchmark pit crews at the Indianapolis Speedway. To ensure that Benchmarking does produce the breakthrough results that top performing companies experience, we offer the following suggestions:

- Use your business strategy to determine the need for change, not a comparison of metrics. Do what's right for your business, your customers, and your employees.
- Analyze, document and measure your process before you engage in dialogue with a potential partner. If you don't know the results of your own practice or process, you can't set goals for improvement, and you can't determine who is performing at the level you need or want to.
- Choose your partners wisely. Don't let someone else choose them for you. Staying within an industry or segment can limit your thinking and contribute to the "best of a bad lot" comparison.
- Be prepared to provide something your partner will value in exchange for their participation in your Benchmarking study. Treat them like valued customers, they may be.
- Adapt the "best practices" of other companies, don't try to adopt them. Just because it works for them, doesn't mean it will work for you. Most practices are not plug and play
- Following the teachings of Bobby Knight: *"The willingness to win is not as important as the willingness to prepare to win."* Preparation improves learning.

Benchmarking is a measurement and management tool that has the potential to enable breakthrough thinking for an organization.

***Einstein was right - "the significant problems we face cannot be solved with the level of thinking that was used to create them."***

As has been outlined here, Benchmarking is NOT simply the comparison of metrics across a group of companies. It requires thoughtful preparation, discipline, tenacity, and an open mind.

***Benchmarking is more than a numbers game!***

For more information on Benchmarking, contact Brian Lowenthal, Managing Partner, The Benchmark Partners, LLC, [blowenthal@thebenchmarkpartners.com](mailto:blowenthal@thebenchmarkpartners.com) or 216.295.9589.

## Recruitment and Selection

### SHRM News / Announcements

#### Monthly Board Article: PEGS—A Reintroduction

By Anthony Dix, VP Programming

How many are not familiar with PEGS? PEGS, otherwise known as Professional Emphasis Groups offer additional programming to the Greater Madison Area SHRM chapter. There are currently three PEGS which focus on a particular area. Below you will find a brief description of each PEG and what the committee structure is seeking.

- Small HR Departments
- Employee/Labor Relations
- Compensation and Benefits
- HI-Tech

#### ***Small HR Pegs Needs Your Help!***

Purpose: To focus on providing small human resource departments or sole human resource managers/generalists with speakers, workshops, and resources.

The Small HR PEG is asking for volunteers to serve on the committee. We plan four FREE programs per year. The attendance at our meetings is intended to be smaller (about 15-30) so we can take a focused look at topics of interest to those in small HR departments. Ann Stefoniak and Clair Eichelberg are the co-chairs. We need to decide on next year's topics and speakers and could use some help. If you are interested please email either Ann at [astefonik@nonmetallic.com](mailto:astefonik@nonmetallic.com) or Clair at [ceichelberg@wipfli.com](mailto:ceichelberg@wipfli.com). Thank you ahead of time for any input you can provide or for being willing to volunteer for our committee!

#### ***PEG Labor/Employee Relations***

Purpose: To focus on providing Human Resource Managers and HR Professionals dealing with labor and employee relation issues within their organization the opportunity for casual networking, best practices sharing, speakers/panel discussions and resources. We are currently in search of an individual to Co-Chair this committee. If you are interested please contact Anthony Dix.

#### ***PEG Compensation and Benefits***

Purpose: Information sharing and education for HR Professionals dealing with compensation and/or benefits issues within their organization or those who are generalists and would like to learn more about compensation and benefits issues. This group is part of the Group Partnership Network of World at Work, the national association for Total Rewards Professionals. Joan Provencher is the current Co-Chair for this PEG. If you are interested in becoming involved, feel free to contact her at 608-251-4156 or by email at [joan\\_provencher@ghc-hmo.com](mailto:joan_provencher@ghc-hmo.com).

#### ***PEG HI-Tech***

Purpose: To provide organized casual discussions and resources for HR Managers and HR Professionals in Hi-Tech companies. This PEG uses an unstructured format and promotes networking and casual roundtable discussions among hi-tech human resource professionals on current issues of concern. We are currently in search of an individual to Co-Chair this committee. If you are interested please contact Anthony Dix.

Feel free to contact Anthony Dix or a Co-Chair if you are interested in joining a PEGS Group. Anthony can be reached at 608-821-4153 or [Anthony.dix@uwmf.wisc.edu](mailto:Anthony.dix@uwmf.wisc.edu).

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## December 14th Chapter Meeting

### Inspiration, Motivation and Humor with James T. Harris

"I had the opportunity to hear James T. Harris speak about a year ago. I haven't forgotten it! He has a way of holding your attention, spinning a story with meaning, and leaving you motivated and inspired by his message. I found the presentation thought-provoking, engaging, challenging, and fun. I am SO pleased we are able to offer GMA SHRM members and guests the opportunity to have this same experience. It will be a great way to end the year and I sincerely hope we have our best turn-out EVER!

This is a busy time of year -- but, trust me - this WILL be worth the time to attend!"

-- Lori Gibson, GMA SHRM Member

[Click here for schedule and registration information.](#)

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### Community: United Way

The United Way of Dane County is looking for Human Resource professionals who are interested in volunteering their time and expertise to help non-profit agencies improve their HR functions. As part of a comprehensive effort to improve the capacity of non-profit agencies to be as effective and efficient as possible, the United Way has identified Human Resource as one of eleven functions involving 77 best practices critical to an agency's success. Others include governance, legal, fiscal, records/data, programs, consumer awareness & responsiveness, volunteer management, planning, evaluation & continuous agency improvement, fundraising & revenue generation and marketing.

If you are looking for an opportunity to serve your community by putting your HR knowledge and expertise to work for United Way of Dane County non-profit agencies in need of your help, please call Kathy Martinson at 608-246-4356 or Tim Jeffery at 608-238-0788.

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### GMA SHRM LocalNet

Yes, it is that time of year...we are updating the LocalNet for the upcoming membership directory.

If you would like to be identified as an "expert" in a human resource topic area and volunteer to speak with other members on the area(s) you select, please take a few minutes to fill out the form you should have received via e-mail on October 28.

At this site, you will also have an opportunity to enroll and update your information for GMA SHRM LocalNet. This information WILL be included in the upcoming directory.

Please complete this online form no later than **NOVEMBER 19, 2004!**

If you have not completed your localnet survey, please complete it via the following link.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=74296283972>

If you have any technical issues or questions, please contact:

Ric Cederholm  
GMA SHRM, Director-At-Large

## **GMA SHRM 2005 Partnership Program and Directory Advertising**

It's that time of year again when your organization can take advantage of the many opportunities to promote itself among GMA SHRM members while providing valuable support of our chapter's many activities.

The 2005 Partnership Program creates great visibility for companies supporting the HR profession or whose client base includes chapter members. For 2005, GMA SHRM has not raised the partnership cost at any level, and we have added some extra features as well. Gold Partners will receive a full-page ad in the directory for 2005, and both Gold and Silver Partners can run color ads in our monthly newsletter, the *HR Link*.

Partnerships are limited, so sign up soon!

GMA SHRM is also gearing up for 2005 directory advertising. Contact us for a rate sheet and information about ad dimensions and format. The directory is sent to the 800+ chapter members and is a valuable source of information year round.

We appreciate your consideration these opportunities and look forward to another successful year with our corporate partners and advertisers.

For more information about the Partnership Program or Directory, please contact David Furlan at [david.furlan@mail.mhcdc.org](mailto:david.furlan@mail.mhcdc.org).

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## **Renaming HR Link Contest**

Calling all members – GMA SHRM is sponsoring a contest to rename the HR Link newsletter! The HR Link has come a long way in the past few months. Along with that facelift, we are looking for a new name.

Need some inspiration? The mission of the HR Link is to provide GMA SHRM members with timely and relevant information, and support the National SHRM mission of serving the professional (STP) and advancing the profession (ATP).

For additional inspiration, GMA SHRM is awarding the winner a night out on the town – a gift certificate to Marcus Cinemas and dinner for two! (Couldn't you use the break?) The deadline to submit ideas is **December 10, 2004**. Please submit your new HR Link name to [chapteradmin@gmashrm.org](mailto:chapteradmin@gmashrm.org). The winner will be announced in the January edition of the HR Link.

Good luck, and have fun!

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## **HR Link Guidelines**

### **Article Writing:**

Do you have an interest in writing for the HR Link? We have an interest in learning more about your area of expertise!

Why should you volunteer? Top three reasons: 1) To share your knowledge and experiences to educate others. 2) To become more connected in the HR and Dane County communities. 3) To contribute towards the advancement of GMA SHRM and the HR profession.

The first step is for you to choose a submission option: you can pre-submit an article to GMA SHRM at any time for us to use in any of the upcoming newsletters, you can sign up to write for a particular month, or we can put you on a list of people to contact in future months whenever we need articles.

**Article length:**

Because the HR Link is now in an online format, the size is flexible. The article should be engaging and hold readers' attention. Include the core information in your article, and we will advise if it is too lengthy.

**Solicitation:**

GMA SHRM conscious not to allow solicitation through the articles, in an effort to protect the interests of our partners and members. The nature of the article should be educational (i.e., what are the business advantages of having a product like yours) or informational. Otherwise, if you truly are interested in advertising through the HR Link, you can work with our Marketing Committee. As a rule of thumb for article writing, if the submission relates to a **for-profit** event, or specifically markets your company (vs. your industry), it is an advertisement, and should be purchased. If it is a **not-for-profit** event that your company is hosting, or an announcement (i.e., a SHRM member recently joined your company), it is an acceptable addition to the HR Link content. If you have any questions related to the appropriateness of your submission, please contact us.

If you have questions, or to submit an article, contact GMA SHRM at [chapteradmin@gmashrm.org](mailto:chapteradmin@gmashrm.org) .